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HILLTOPICS

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Patent Annoyances

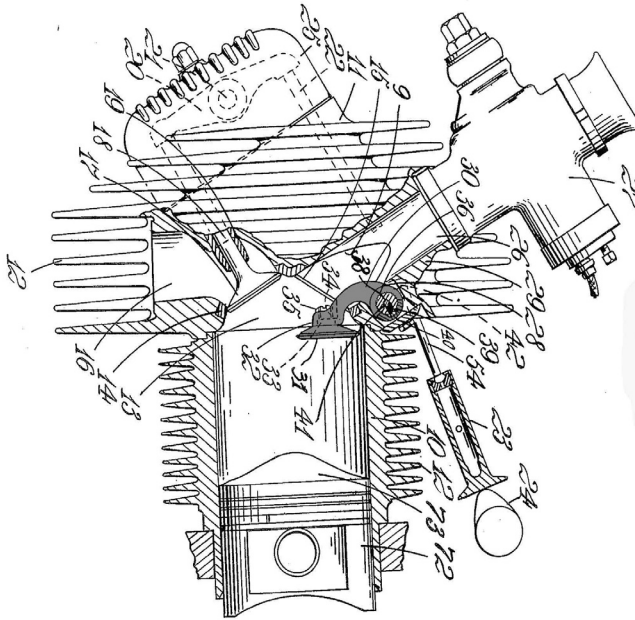
by James Justinic

When I was much younger, patents fascinated me, or at least what I knew about patents. Inventors were the most amazing people on the face of the Earth, and patents were the gold-embossed certificates hanging on the wall that attested to that fact. What more could you ever want or need? Certainly nobody would question something that fancy hanging on the wall, especially an inventor's wall. Inventor was, hands down, the best job ever.

I was quite upset to learn later that inventor wasn't quite an actual job in the way I thought it was, and, of course, that picture-perfect view of the patent system didn't last very long either once I started reading actual news related to patents. I suppose it's not very surprising that a young child's view doesn't quite match the real world situation, but strangely enough, I think I might actually be more amused with the patent system now than I was back then. This time, however, it's not for the prestige.

Technology is one of my main passions, and not a day goes by that I don't read at least a dozen or so news articles from various technology news sites. Every day, I visit and expect a large number of the articles to focus on new and upcoming technology, but more and more seem to be about legal issues. If it's not a lawsuit yet, it will be a

lawsuit soon. I do attempt to read these articles, but it has become quite difficult. Merely the subheadline tends to send me into an uncontrollable fit of laughter, primarily in disbelief. I'd expect to see these stories as joke during one of the late night comedy shows, not as one of the day's biggest tech stories.



Hold on a second! I have a brilliant idea that just can't wait until I've finish writing this article. I have just invented a method for temporarily storing unwanted items in a person's living area without any impact to the square footage of the aforementioned living area. That sounds a lot like some of these patent summaries I've read, but do you have any clue what I really invented? Half the time I don't think the patent office does either. Patents aren't supposed to be awarded for obvious creations. So in common language, I used duct tape to attach a trashcan to the wall. All I have to do now is sit on that for awhile and the inventors of the trash teleportation device will be paying my retirement.

I don't think I'd have a problem with these things if everyone just had a good laugh and moved on. However, in the interest of those few that do have a legitimate complaint,

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We welcome submissions from all members of the SMU community. Letters to the editor should be up to 300 words in response to a previously published article. Contributions should be articles of up to 300-600 words on any topic or in response to another article. Please email your submission to hilltopics@gmail.com by Wednesday at 7:00 PM to be included in the following week's publication. Special deadlines will be observed for breaking campus events. The opinions expressed in *Hilltopics* are those of the authors solely and do not reflect the beliefs of *Hilltopics* or any other entity. As such, *Hilltopics* does not publish anonymous articles.

Fantasy Music Leagues

by Thomas Dunlap

I've never been a part of a fantasy league but I think I've come close. When I was in elementary school the faculty made the mistake of opening the computer lab up during recess (foursquare!) and lunch. At around the same time someone found out about a website that let you build what resembled a stock portfolio of professional athletes. If I remember correctly (and understand leagues correctly) this wasn't like a league because you didn't have to have a full roster and think about what positions you needed, if I wanted all point guards point guards is what I got. The system was much closer to the actual stock market than I realized at the time. There was no set correlation between performance and value, it was based purely on user demand, and there wasn't really any competition aside from looking over at your neighbor's screen to compare gains. Just like how stock brokers crane their necks to see what type of car or watch the others have. Needless to say this "game" was mesmerizing and pretty much every boy could be found sleeves rolled up, pacing and popping Childrens' Tums in the lab until the school stepped in and shoved us all outside again.

Over the years people have tried to tap in to man's innate zeal for having their organizational and managerial skills quantified combined with a lust for competition and their nerdy obsessions for (I would assume) financial gain. Not surprisingly this generally results in a focus on sports or music. MTV had a pointless stock ticker like system for adding your "favorite" "hot act" and watching them rise or fall based on criteria I never figured out. There were also a couple more sites that I can't remember in great detail anymore. There seemed to be a million problems with the systems even if you could get past that nagging, "what's the point" question. How to quantify a band's success? was a big one. With MTV it was probably something about how much airtime an artist's video got or how much money that artist's label was paying MTV but for a site without an enclosed mini-universe assessing something like that should be way harder. Artistic merit

flew out the door. Would it be based on record sales? Intangible buzz and media appearances? You never could end up adding your actual favorite bands because they weren't in the database or they weren't in the midst of promoting an album. Basically everything sucked.

I haven't thought about any of these systems since I was 7th grade, and I'm probably putting more thought into them now than I ever did then but I just stumbled upon a new one and despite knowing better already I couldn't help but think, "That could be a lot of fun." Why will I never learn? On the surface, The Next Big Sound seems like it could have addressed a lot of the problems I associate with the older fantasy music roster systems.

1: Scarcity – They only allow you ten bands on your roster. I'm not sure whether you can change up your roster but the about section implied that you couldn't.

2: They get rid of the frustration of not seeing you're favorite bands listed because you don't know any of the bands listed. The Next Big Sound crew make the bon mot that "all your favorite artists were once unsigned" and as a fledgling mogul you won't have access to those already established bands. You're trying to start your own fictional label here so you'll need to grab some new acts. Which leads into fix three ...

3: They establish a point, (kinda) which is finding new music. You could also argue that this provides a more realistic "fantasy" element because while it creates an what is certainly a simple story, it is a story nonetheless complete with clearly defined character motivation. There should be a chat room somewhere where people can chat in character.

4: They rank things the way all scenesters already do – time-based cred. The system puts you in different brackets



based on when you “sign” a band and you score points off of every band wagon jumping schmuck that comes along after you. Just like in real life you can say that you’ve been listening to Mega Chainsaw Death’s ironic brand of metal since long before it got cool. I suspect this is why live music is so popular. It has oft been complained that the bulk of concert goers are there to see and be seen. Sounds an awful lot like gathering witnesses to corroborate your story, no? It would be easier to establish a music alibi with a ticket stub but that kind of sentimentality could be interpreted as weakness in some hipster circles. Normalcy at the very least. If Next Big Sound doesn’t make it, there might be something in the idea of digital timestamps for fans.

It’s the notion of getting in before it gets cool though that leads us to The Next Big Sound’s fatal flaw, listening to that band won’t ever get cool. Because the bands on there right now just aren’t that good. Maybe it’s just because the criteria for bands are too broad and you can’t go into the general rock section without getting a bunch of crappy alt bands (seriously I didn’t think people were even bothering to make alt records anymore) but it just seems like you’re going to spend forever randomly trudging through terrible songs and quite possibly never come across a band that you’d fake sign for free to a non-existent label.

I thought the concept of a place solely for unsigned bands that tried to foster a sense of activity and invested interest in listeners was worth a mention though. They have enough little fixes that it made the idea briefly exciting to me until I thought about how much time I already waste on the internet. And who knows, maybe they’ll refine the means for finding bands or maybe this thing will take off as a destination for unsigned bands and we’ll see some awesome talent on there, but I’m going to have to risk letting everyone get in those early brackets now and come back only if this goes viral.

Thomas is a senior English major and can be reached at tdunlap@smu.edu

Patents

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there’s nothing to do but treat every complaint as if it’s the real deal, no matter how frivolous it sounds. Sadly, this also means that companies have to dedicate many resources to deal with these issues. If research and development costs of the actual concept weren’t high enough, now add in the cost of researching and licensing vague patents that could sound similar. Instead of innovating, true creators of new ideas have to make sure that every little thing has a patent, or risk having it stolen right from under their nose. Instead of being the prestigious prize of the noble inventor, the patent has become the reservation for a lawsuit or the prevention of one. No actual invention required.

James is a junior theatre design/technology major and can be reached at jjustini@smu.edu

Do you have an opinion about... politics, music, class, television, football, shopping, intramurals, fraternities, movies, tests, the Mavs, sex, restaurants, religion, sororities, driving, study abroad, Umphrey Lee, fashion, news, the war, parking, technology, magazines, bars, baseball, the weather, professors, the Mustang Band, dating, books, nightclubs, Texas, the Daily Campus, pets, club sports, or anything else **?**

we’re listening at hilltopics@gmail.com

Young Candidates Speak Truth to Power

Cody Meador

It goes without saying these days that young people are getting more interested and involved in politics. During the 2008 election we heard endless discussion about the involvement of youth in the campaigns and speculation about whether all the other young people would actually turn out to vote. They did; fifty percent of voters aged 18 to 29 voted in the 2008 election, making up 18 percent of the total electorate. In addition, there were people much younger volunteering on campaigns across the country (and I don't mean that little boy who sold his bicycle and gave the money to Hillary during the primaries). More young people involved in politics is definitely a good thing. However, we still need to think about who we're supporting when we volunteer. Is the candidate a middle-aged or older and middle-class or wealthier white dude? Chances are that it is. We (the youth) continue to be represented in government by an overall unrepresentative body of elected officials. What's more, the issues at stake are becoming increasingly important to us as we feel more and more affected by the economy, primarily, but many other issues, as well.

An impressive slate of young people ran for office and won in 2006 and 2008. In 2006, voters sent several 30-somethings to the House of Representatives, including Reps. Patrick Murphy (D-PA), Chris Murphy (D-CN), Heath Shuler (D-NC) and Adrian Smith (R-NB). Nonetheless, older folks still dominate in the highest chambers of government. For example, the average age of members of Congress has been creeping toward 60 throughout the past few elections. The average age of a senator in the 110th Congress (the last one) was 61.7 years. It is important, however, to realize that this average is pulled upward by oldies like Senators Robert Byrd (D-WV), now 91, and Daniel Inouye (D-HI), now 84, both of whom continue to serve after the 2008 election. In fact, Inouye has represented Hawaii in either the U.S. House or Senate since it became a state in 1959. The point is that while these men undoubtedly possess valuable and incomparable insight and expertise, they are also really old and the average senator is not much younger. They lack many things that a young politician can bring to the table.

Young people, in fact, might have equally invaluable experience and information about completely different subjects, like new technologies and schools of thought in education, communication, urban development, and so on. The list is certainly endless.

Like most politicians, young candidates usually start in lower levels of government than the U.S. Senate. A young man named Aaron Schock from Peoria, Illinois is an example of a student who noticed problems in his life and successfully took matters into his own hands. At the age of 19, he challenged the president of the Peoria School Board. The incumbent succeeded in having him excluded from the bal-

lot on technicality issues, and he still defeated her with 60% of the vote as a write-in candidate. By 23 years of age his colleagues had voted him to the seat of president of the board, and at 22 years old he ran as a Republican and defeated an eight term Democratic incumbent for the State House of Representatives. In 2008, he was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. He is not only the youngest member of Congress, but he is also only the fifth person to represent his district since 1933.

y interrupted a series of in-ly took their positions for not wholly accountable stitueuts. I will add that to have been incredibly although it also seems to



SCHOCK seems well-funded, be from his own hard work.

There are young people vying for important seats in local 2009 elections as well. One is an SMU student, Warren Seay. At 20 years old, Warren is running for DeSoto School Board, Place 6. Similar to Aaron Schock, Warren attended DeSoto schools and noticed problems that weren't being addressed by the school board, problems that continue to plague students, parents, and in truth the entire DeSoto community. He realized his call to service and launched a campaign with a grassroots ethic and a focus on community involvement in the school system and bringing DeSoto schools up to the achievement level they should be reaching. Warren's election is May 9, with early voting starting on April 27.



The Dallas City Council races are also sporting a couple young candidates. Twenty-two year old Fernando Rubio is challenging Steve Salazar, the longest serving city councilman, in District 6. Rubio is a university student and a teacher. He grew up in West Dallas and feels that the area not only needs a new representative in city government, but also that it is inappropriate in a democratic system for a candidate to run unopposed. Salazar is one of several City Councilmen who generally runs unopposed, assuming reelection not unlike the incumbent that Aaron Schock unseated in Illinois last November. However, that is certainly not Rubio's only reason for pursuing the position on City Council. Another youth who may be entering Dallas City Hall is LeVar D. Thomas, 27, who is challenging Tennell Atkins in District 8. Thomas is actually the grandson of Dallas legend and former city councilman Al Lipscomb, but he is also a passionately involved civic leader. He is running, he says, because under Atkins the neighborhoods in District 8, which covers eastern parts of south Dallas, are getting worse and not better.

Never take for granted that elected officials have to fit a certain cookie cutter mold. If you notice flaws in the way your hometown or school district has been governed and you have ideas about how to improve the situation, seriously consider running for office. There are vast amounts of resources to help you in books, online, and even here at SMU. Lastly, remember that the young candidates in the Dallas area need your help so if you have the time and energy, contact them to volunteer on their campaigns!!

Cody Meador is a junior political science major and can be reached at codylm@gmail.com

Hilltopics 2009-2010 Editor Application

Please return by 30 April to hilltopics@gmail.com or any Hilltopics distributor.

Name: _____ Email: _____
 Phone Number: _____ Year: _____
 Major(s) and Minor(s): _____

Preference of Position: (please rank 1-6, 1 being your first choice; note that actual positions filled may vary from those on application)

- ____ **Editor-in-Chief** (conducts weekly meetings of editorial staff, directs overall management of publication)
- ____ **Business Manager** (spokesperson for Hilltopics to the SMU community, facilitates the logistics of keeping Hilltopics in good standing with the University)
- ____ **Copy Editor** (responsible for editing articles for length, grammar, and content)
- ____ **Distribution Manager** (designs and implements the Hilltopics distributions strategy)
- ____ **Graphics Editor** (designs each edition of Hilltopics and advertisements, as needed; responsible for generating and submitting PDF to printer each week; requires experience with Adobe Photoshop and Adobe InDesign)
- ____ **Managing Editor** (directs the content of each issue and, in the case of controversy, has the final say as to what articles are or are not included)

Please note that every editor, regardless of their particular position, will be responsible for distributing Hilltopics each week, and will also write articles as needed.

Application Questions:

Please briefly answer each of the following questions on a separate sheet and submit your responses with your application.

1. Why are you applying to be a Hilltopics editor?
2. What do you think are the biggest strengths and biggest weaknesses of Hilltopics?
3. What is a political, social, or cultural issue about which you care deeply? That is, what kinds of topics would you be most interested in writing about for Hilltopics? Why is this issue important to you?
4. Do you have any journalism/writing/design experience (lack of experience in no way disqualifies any applicant from consideration)?



Third Annual
Hilltopics Campus Essay Contest
2009

This spring semester, Hilltopics is hosting its third annual campus-wide essay contest, and you are invited to participate! Contestants will write one essay according to the prompt and guidelines below for a chance at some much needed cash: one grand prize, \$100; two honorable mentions, \$50 each. In addition, the top three essays will be published in a special issue of Hilltopics.

Prompt: With the ability to procure the news at any time and any place and the economy shrinking, newspapers are in trouble. They are cutting staff and budgets, and some are shutting down completely. Senator Cardin (D-MD) even suggested that newspaper companies should get tax breaks. What is the future of the newspaper business? How should newspapers change in order to fit a changing time and still profit? And why does our culture feel so distressed about the newspaper going extinct, but not about other things that have become outmoded?

Submission Requirements

Contestants should follow the instructions below carefully or else risk disqualification:

- Essays should be between 500 and 600 words.
- All essays must be emailed to hilltopics@gmail.com by 5 p.m. on Friday, April 16, 2008.
- All essays must have a cover page with the following information: contestant's name, email address, telephone number, major(s), classification (year graduating), and student ID number. Nothing but this personal information should be on the cover page.
- The contestant's name should NOT appear on any page OTHER THAN the cover page. All other pages should include the contestant's student ID number in the upper right-hand corner.
- All essay titles should appear on the first page of text, not the cover page.

Adjudicating Criteria

Essays will be judged according to the following elements:

- clarity of thought, argument, and idea
- syntax, spelling, word choice, and grammar
- use of specific examples, information, and details to support assertions
- essay addressed the prompt fully and creatively
- essay adhered to the submission requirements listed above

Questions? Contact Cody Meador at codyLM@gmail.com



SMU Football
Red vs. Blue Scrimmage
Saturday, April 25, 2009
1:00 PM
Gerald Ford Stadium



Thumbs up:

- Hilltopics Annual Essay Contest
- Surviving zombie Jesus
- The prospect of summer pay checks



Thumbs down:

- Reading DPRs makes my brain hurt
- The blocking off of the quickest way to deadman on Airline
- Tuition increases for next school year

Upcoming Events:

April 18 Art for Darfur

A fundraiser to benefit Amnesty International's Darfur Campaign.

Meadows School for the Arts

Doors and silent auction open at 7 p.m.

Live auction opens at 8:30 p.m.

Auctions end at 9:30 p.m.

HilltopicsStaff

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SMU Totally Fictitious Fact:

SMU's blond density is 1000x that of Sweden.

